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Soldiers in Greenland - 1930 to 1990

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Published in:
British Army Review

Publication date:
2021

Licence:
UK Government Non-Commercial Licence

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Agnew of Lochnaw, S. C. (2021). Soldiers in Greenland - 1930 to 1990. *British Army Review*, Spring/Summer 2021(180), 112-121.

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BRITISH ARMY REVIEW

NUMBER 180 SPRING/SUMMER 2021



The Journal of British Military Thought



Soldiers in Greenland - 1930 to 1990

Major (retired) Sir Crispin Agnew, Royal Highland Fusiliers, FRGS, Queen's Counsel, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Dundee provides BAR Readers with a concise history of the Army's involvement in the exploration of Greenland.



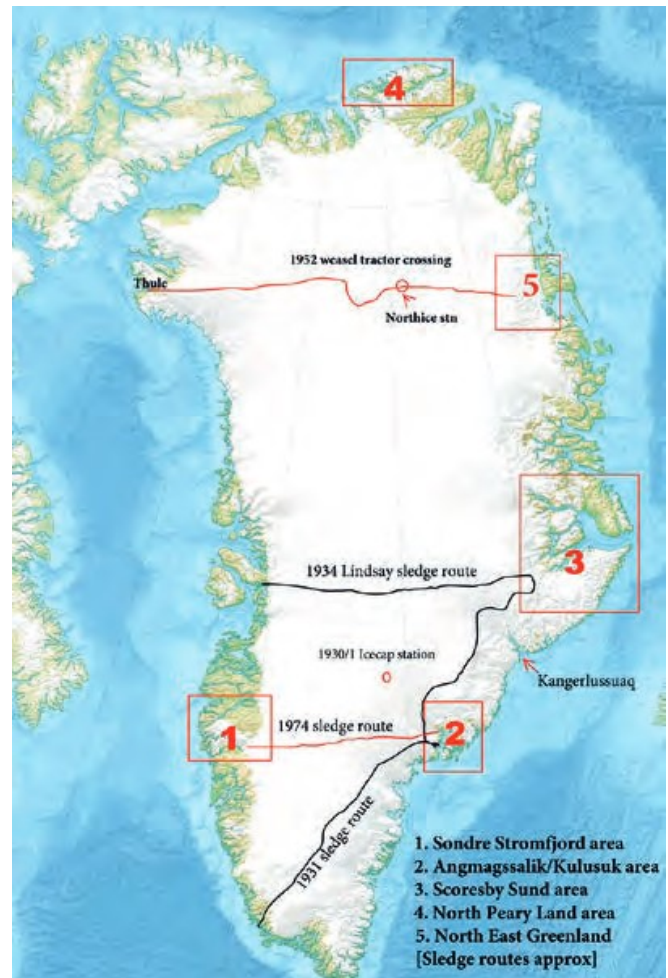
The wilderness and ruggedness of Greenland. Photo: Corporal Adrian Harlen ABIPP, Crown Copyright

‘To take an idea and make it happen; to lead others safely in dangerous places; to sustain them and to receive their support in return; to enjoy the comradeship of shared endeavour; to add a little more to the sum of global exploration; these are the real returns and for some of us they come very near to being sufficient.’

Major Tim King¹

Greenland is now a recognised destination for army adventurous training² with numerous unit expeditions going climbing in Greenland each year.³ However, it is not generally known that soldiers have been exploring in Greenland since the 1930s. The author was privileged to have explored and climbed in Greenland in the 1960s, when adventurous training was first introduced and Greenland could be accessed via airfields established during and after World War 2 (WW2).⁴ This article aims to set out the history of soldiers exploring and climbing in Greenland from the 1930s to 1990 with references to relevant sources so that those who are interested in the history can follow it up.⁵

The first soldiers to explore in Greenland were Lieutenant Martin Lindsay⁶, Royal Scots Fusiliers, the expedition surveyor, and Captain Percy Lemon⁷, Royal Signals, the wireless operator, as members of the British Arctic Air Route Expedition 1930-1931⁸ led by Henry (Gino) Watkins.⁹ The expedition, with two tiger moth aircraft, surveyed part of the east coast, collected climate data, and looked for suitable landing sites for trans-Atlantic flights. The expedition struggled to set up the ice cap station, where they left Augustine Courtauld¹⁰ to winter on his own while collecting weather data and then the expedition over-wintered in Angmagssalik. The following summer



Map of Greenland showing some of the historical expeditions.
Image: Author's Collection

Watkins, Courtauld and Lemon explored northwards to the head of the Kangerlussuaq fiord. Then they made an arduous boat trip southward round Kap Farvel reaching Nanortalik. Lemon fell seriously ill after this trip and died in 1932. Meanwhile, Lindsay and two others dog-sledged 450 miles south from Angmagssalik to Ivigtut, taking 27

- 1 King, Major Timothy, RAOC, *Exercise Snow Dance*, Liverpool Land Expedition 1989, p. 18 'Adventurous Training and Expeditions - A personal comment'.
- 2 Adventurous Training Group (Army) website which refer to Adventurous Training 'skiing first descents in Greenland'. <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/corps-regiments-and-units/adventurous-training-group-army/> (accessed 4 August 2020).
- 3 e.g. Brigade of Gurkhas Greenland 2019 - <https://www.gurkhabde.com/exercise-tiger-arcc-greenland/> (accessed 4 August 2020) and Royal Logistic Corp 2019 - <https://www.royallogisticcorps.co.uk/high-risk-adventure-training-in-greenland/> (accessed 4 August 2020)
- 4 e.g., at Søndrestrøm (Area 1), Angmagssalik (Tasiilaq)/Kulusuk (Area 2), with Mestersvíg and later Constable Pynt airfields serving Scoresby Sund (Area 3) and Thule (Areas 4 & 5) - see Fig 1 for areas.
- 5 For map see: Government of Greenland, Greenland interactive map. <https://tinyurl.com/ybfbafs6> (Accessed 2 July 2020).
- 6 Lindsay, Lieutenant Colonel Sir Martin, of Dowhill Bt CBE, DSO, MP. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Online Edition. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/31363> (accessed 10 August 2020).
- 7 Scott, J.M. and Lemon, Captain P.M.H., Royal Signals, Obituary, *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 80, No. 6 (Dec. 1932), pp. 559-560.
- 8 Scott Polar Research Institute, Picture Library catalogue: British Arctic Air Route Expedition 1930-31. <https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/picturelibrary/catalogue/baare/> (accessed 7 August 2020)
- 9 Ridgeway, John and Watkins, Gino, (Oxford University Press, 1974).
- 10 Augustine Courtauld collection, Scott Polar Research Institute Archives, University of Cambridge. <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/5b0bcde6-5b3d-3c24-aa7f-6a22d05c9710> (accessed 29 July 2020).

days, surveying the height of the mountains and ice-cap in the area. The expedition members were awarded the Polar Medal.¹¹

Watkins returned to east Greenland in 1932¹² with three other team members, but drowned in a kayaking accident. He had no soldiers with him, but was accompanied by Freddie Spencer Chapman¹³ also a member of the 1930/31 expedition, who climbed in the Himalayas, had a distinguished war record, best known for his guerilla exploits in the Malayan jungle.¹⁴

Lindsay returned in 1934, leading the three-man British Trans-Greenland Expedition¹⁵ that included Lieutenant Arthur Godfrey, Royal Engineers¹⁶, and Andrew Croft.¹⁷ They dog-sledged across Greenland from the west, just north of Jakobshavn, along latitude 70° arriving at the Mountains of the Dead (Dødemandsstoppen). They then sledged south surveying the peaks and glaciers from the icecap, fixing the position of Gunnbjørn Fjeld, the highest peak in Greenland. The party exited the icecap down the glacier used by the 1930 expedition having set a record with the sledge journey of 1,050 miles.

Lindsay left the army in 1936 standing unsuccessfully as conservative candidate for Brigg in Lincolnshire. He rejoined the army in 1939 eventually commanding the Gordon Highlanders.¹⁸ In 1946 he was elected MP for Solihull and remained an MP until 1964 and was created a Baronet in 1962. After the 1934 expedition, Godfrey and Croft joined the Oxford University Arctic Expedition

1935-36¹⁹ and were awarded the Polar Medal (Silver).²⁰ Croft went on to explore in the Antarctic before serving in the Special Operations Executive during WW2, obtaining a regular commission. He retired in 1959 as a Colonel Commandant of the Army Apprentices College, Harrogate.

Following these expeditions there was no further British army exploration of Greenland until the scientific British North East Greenland Expedition 1951-2²¹ led by Commander C.J.W. Simpson CBE, DSC, Polar Medal,²² Royal Navy. The expedition consisted of seven principal scientists and supporting assistants, including service personnel. The army members included Staff Sergeant JW Oakley, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), Vehicle mechanic (both years), Captain JS Agar, Royal Signals, Radio Officer (1st year), Captain RJM Fletcher, Royal Engineers, General duties (2nd year), Warrant Officer II D. Howard, REME, Vehicle mechanic (2nd year).²³

The expedition explored in and around Dronning Louise Land in the north east (Area 5) with a base camp at Britannia Sø, a lake to which Coastal Command Sunderland flying boats airlifted the stores. From here the expedition gained access to the ice-cap up the Britannia glacier, establishing a base on the ice-cap named Northice. The expedition studied geology, glaciology, meteorology, and physiology and carried out gravimetric and seismological surveys as well as providing information to the services on operating in the arctic. The Seismic Team crossed the ice-cap from Britannia base to Thule on the west coast using Weasel snow tractors.

11 *London Gazette*, 4 November 1932, Issue 33880 p. 6991. <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/33880/page/6991> (accessed 29 July 2020).

12 Rymill, J.R., Riley, Quintin and Spencer Chapman, F., *The Tugtilik (Lake Fjord) Country, East Greenland*, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 5 (May, 1934), pp. 364-377.

13 Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Spencer Chapman, DSO & Bar, ED, Polar Medal. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Online Edition. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30919> (accessed 12 August 2020)

14 Chapman, Frederick Spencer, *The Jungle is Neutral* (Chatto and Windus, 1949).

15 Lindsay, Martin, *Sledge, The British Trans-Greenland Expedition 1934*, (Cassells 1934).

16 Arthur Godfrey Archive, Scott Polar Research Institute, Archives, University of Cambridge <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/36d7a5b4-a92c-332b-b70e-d5433ee7cba4> (accessed 24 July 2020).

17 Croft, Colonel Andrew, DSO, OBE, Polar Medal. <https://acmf.org.uk/andrew-croft/> (accessed 22 July 2020); c.f. Andrew Croft, *Polar Exploration*, (A and C Black, 1940). Eric Pace, Andrew Croft, Arctic Explorer and Winter Warfare Expert, 91, *The New York Times*, Obituary July 6, 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/06/world/andrew-croft-arctic-explorer-and-winter-warfare-expert-91.html> (accessed 22 July 2020).

18 Lindsay, Lieutenant Colonel Martin, DSO, *So Few Got Through*, (London: Collins, 1946).

19 Glen, A.R., and Keith, D.B., *The Oxford University Arctic Expedition 1935-36*, *Nature* 135, 604 -606. <https://www.nature.com/articles/135604a0.pdf> (accessed 24 July 2020); Oxford University Arctic Expedition, 1935-136. (1936). *Polar Record*, 2(11), 19-23. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/polar-record/article/oxford-university-arctic-expedition-1935136/5CBA51361C48D129E227C1BB0D5E2E3F> (accessed 26 July 2020).

20 *London Gazette*, 6 February 1942, Supplement: 35449, p. 654. <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/35449/supplement/654> (accessed 24 July 2020).

21 Simpson, C.J.W., *The British North East Greenland Expedition*, *The Geographical Journal* 1955, Vol 121, No. 3 (Sep. 1955), pp. 274-289. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1786023.pdf?seq=1> (accessed 20 July 2020). C.J.W. Simpson, *North Ice*. (Hodder & Stoughton, 1957).

22 Commander Jim Simpson, *The Telegraph* Obituary 17 May 2002. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1394433/Commander-Jim-Simpson.html> (accessed 20 July 2020).

23 *The Polar Medal was awarded to all members of the expedition – The London Gazette*, 26 November 1954, Supplement: 40339, p. 6789. <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/40339/supplement/6789> (accessed 20 July 2020).



Pictured are two TA soldiers taking part in Exercise MIDNIGHT SUN in Greenland to test their skills in sailing, mountaineering and sea-kayaking along with their arctic skills. As part of the expedition, satellite and radio specialists from the Royal Signals will be working alongside the BT Emergency Response Team (ERT), as part of Defence Career Partnering, to establish a robust wireless network that could be deployed quickly to keep essential lines of communication open during an emergency. Photo: Adrian Harlen ABIPP, Crown Copyright

In the summer of 1960, Major Anthony Streather²⁴, Gloucestershire Regiment was on Brigadier Sir John Hunt's²⁵ expedition to the Stauning Alps (Area 3) for boys undertaking their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award.²⁶ Streather, who had a significant record of Himalayan climbing, went on to lead the British & Nepalese Army Everest Expedition 1976 (Everest 1976).²⁷

Expeditions to Greenland started from the mid 1960s, encouraged by the Army Mountaineering Association

(AMA),²⁸ formed in 1957, and the new Adventurous Training policy,²⁹ which provided for 'controlled exposure to risk, to develop leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, moral and physical courage'.³⁰ Field Marshal Templar is credited with stimulating AMA expeditions, when, in 1965, at a dull AMA meeting he burst out 'stop wittering on and go climb some f...g mountains'.³¹

First off the block, in 1966, was Major John Peacock, REME. Peacock who had taken part in the 1964 Joint

24 Streather, Colonel Tony, *The Telegraph* Obituary 2 November 2018. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2018/11/02/colonel-tony-streather-soldier-became-one-leading-figures-golden/> (accessed 22 July 2020).

25 Leader of the 1953 Everest Expedition and afterwards Lord Hunt of Llanfair Waterdine.

26 Danger, D.F.O., *Alpine Notes*, *Alpine Journal* 1960, p. 224 at 238. [All *Alpine Journal* references can be found through the *Alpine Journal* search engine <https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/>].

27 Fleming, Jon and Faux, Ronald, *Soldiers on Everest*, (HMSO, London 1977).

28 <https://www.armymountaineer.org.uk/History/> (accessed 20 July 2020).

29 The National Archives, *Adventure Training Scheme: policy*. Reference WO 32/19687 (1962-1966). https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?q=adventure+training+scheme%3A+policy&_sd=&_ed=&_hb= (accessed 20 July 2020). *Army General Administrative Instruction*, Vol. 1, Chapter 11, *Adventure Training* <https://discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk/army/army-service-benefits/army-service-benefits-adventurous-training> (MODNet access only).

30 From the current definition of Adventurous Training. *Joint Services Adventurous Training (JSAT) Scheme*, JSP 419, paragraph 6. <https://discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk/army/army-service-benefits/army-service-benefits-adventurous-training> (MODNet access only)

31 Bronco Lane, *Military Mountaineering, A history of Services Mountaineering 1945-2000*, (Hayloft 2000) p. 55. ("Military Mountaineering").

Services Expedition (JSE) to South Georgia,³² took a party of three officer cadets from Royal Military Academy (RMA) Sandhurst to the Sukkertoppen ice-cap, flying into Sondrestrom.³³ The party climbed two virgin peaks and put up a new route on Mt Atter. Officer Cadet Charles Walshaw went on to join JSE Elephant Island 1970/71 and Nuptse 1975. Peacock returned to the Ikkamiut area near Sukkertoppen in 1967, with Major Jon Fleming, Parachute Regiment, as deputy leader.³⁴ They went by boat to the head of the Ikkamiut and then used canoes to get to base camp at the east end of lake Tasersuak, where they undertook some scientific work, got onto the local ice-cap via the Col St Andre and climbed 26 peaks (24 first ascents).

In 1969, Peacock led the JSE North Peary Land (Area 4)³⁵ with Lieutenant A.M. Griffin, Light Infantry and Lieutenant C J Grant, Royal Signals as the army members. The Ministry of Defence established the Joint Services Expedition Trust 'to further the efficiency of the armed forces of the crown and to educate their personnel by undertaking or supporting expeditions and adventurous training activities'.³⁶ The Trust sponsored joint services expeditions from the early 1960s and this expedition was part of the series. The 1969 expedition carried out exploratory and scientific work (geology, glaciology and ornithology), a closed tellurometer and theodolite traverse of the peninsula and climbed 21 peaks. Peacock was awarded the Royal Geographical Society, Ness Award.



Pictured is Hurry Inlet and Scorebysund circa 1989. Photo: Author's Collection

32 Combined Services Expeditions to South Georgia, 1964-65. (1966). *Polar Record*, 13(82), 70-71. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/polar-record/article/combined-services-expedition-to-south-georgia-196465/BB206D9F7DF78DA50CBB09099DEDA2F8> (accessed 29 July 2020).

33 Peacock, J.D.C., Sandhurst in Greenland, 1966, *Alpine Journal* 1967 pp. 45 – 56.

34 Peacock, John, Sukkertoppen Wedding Cake: The Army Mountaineering Expedition, 1967, *Alpine Journal* 1968 pp. 234 – 240.

35 Peacock, John, North Peary Land, British Expedition, 1969, *Alpine Journal* 1970 pp. 237 – 239. Peacock, J. (1970). Joint Services Expedition to North Peary Land, 1969. *Polar Record*, 15(94), 54-55. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/polar-record/article/joint-services-expedition-to-north-peary-land-1969/C2E3D2A9472AF5D935B35E780DD15B40> (accessed 29 July 2020). National Archives, Joint Services Expedition: North Peary Land 1969 Reference WO 32/21643 <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C2554785> (accessed 29 July 2020).

36 Charity Commission, the Joint Services Expedition Trust. <https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=263682&subid=0> (accessed 21 July 2020).

After Greenland, Peacock was involved in the training and planning for Everest 1976, which included training expeditions to Himachal Pradesh (1973)³⁷ and Nuptse (1975).³⁸ His final posting, was Colonel Commandant of the Princess Marina College for REME apprentices.³⁹

In 1966, the author took part in the Royal Navy East Greenland Expedition (RNEGE) which planned to visit Schweizerland, inland from Angmagssalik.⁴⁰ During the spring, the leader, Lieutenant Commander Michael Thomas, laid a supplies depot by dog-sledge near Conniatsbjoerg at the head of the Häbet glacier. Thomas had a climbing injury weeks before the summer expedition, so Lieutenant Commander Chris Stocken, DSC⁴¹ took over as leader. In July, the expedition sledge hauled to the Conniatsbjoerg depot to find a member of an Imperial College (IC) expedition⁴² with a broken leg, eating the expedition rations. Surgeon Lieutenant Noel Dilly, Royal Navy Reserve, plastered the leg. A deal was done to exchange rations at the Conniatsbjoerg for some of the IC rations air dropped to the Femstjernen. However, the airdrop rations had been blown into crevasses and it took a long time for the IC party to find them. Eight of the RNEGE team going to collect the rations failed to rendezvous with the IC team as IC were behind schedule. So, they returned to a food dump 20 miles away and climbed in the area until the food ran out before returning to the Conniatsbjoerg. Here four team members had been climbing, but a fall by Flying Officer Roy Dearman, Royal Air Force (RAF), brought the team off the mountain. While Aircraft Artificer Peter Garden led Dearman back to camp, Garden stepped on a hidden crevasse and fell to his death. Stocken then decided that the author with two others, should return to the coast to report the death. The rest of the party, now having a location for the IC food dump, trekked back to the Schweizerland and climbed 16 peaks. On the last climb, as the party retreated in bad weather, Stocken was killed by a falling rock. The team evacuated to the coast, meeting the coastal team near the Tasissarsik ice-fall, and returned to the United Kingdom.⁴³ This expedition demonstrated the ethos of adventurous training, which was active service substitute, where the team had to cope, without outside



The 1968 Team: from left to right, the author, Jon Flemming, Bruce James & Dr Noel Dilly. Photo: Author's Collection.

help, with frustrations, changes of plan, the prospect of food running out, and casualties where the situations were 'real life' and not an exercise that could be abandoned.

In 1968, the author led the Army East Greenland Expedition to the Kristian glacier, with Fleming and Dilly and others.⁴⁴ The aim was to climb in the area and make an attempt on Mt Forel, Greenland's second highest peak, while collecting botanical specimens for Lancaster University. The author, Captain Timothy Taylor, Royal Green Jackets and Gunner Bruce James, Royal Artillery flew by RAF Andover to Kulusuk as the advance party. James injured himself and remained in Kulusuk before joining the main party. The author and Taylor then made their way, sledge hauling over 14 days, to the Kristian glacier to receive an airdrop. The route in followed that of the 1966 expedition to the Femstjernen and then into the Kristian glacier. Travel was mainly at night when the snow was frozen, but the complex crevasse and meltwater systems of the Femstjernen made route finding very difficult to get onto the Kristian glacier. While waiting for the airdrop and the main party to arrive,

37 Fleming, Jon, *The Army Mountaineering Association Himal Pradesh Expedition 1973*, *Alpine Journal* 1974 pp. 21-27.

38 Fleming, Jon, *Nuptse 1975*, *Alpine Journal* 1975 pp. 107-116.

39 Peacock, Nigel and Cleare, John, *In Memoriam; John Peacock (1931-2014)*, *Alpine Journal* 2015 pp. 427 – 431.

40 Thomas, M.B. and Wallis, R.H., *The Royal Naval East Greenland Expedition. 1966*, *Alpine Journal* 1967 Pt 1 pp. 29 – 35, Pt 2 pp. 212 – 224.

41 Christopher Maitland Stocken, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Maitland_Stocken (accessed 26 July 2020).

42 American Alpine Club, North America, *Greenland, Imperial College East Greenland Expedition, July 1967*. <http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/12196737700/North-America-Greenland-Imperial-College-East-Greenland-Expedition> (accessed 12 August 2020)

43 Halliworth, Rodney, *The Last Flowers on Earth*, (Angley Books, 1966).

44 Dilly, Noel, *East Greenland: Kristians glacier area 1968*, *Alpine Journal* pp. 276 – 281. *National Records of Scotland, Author's expedition papers & files, Agnew of Lochnaw Muniments GD154, Nos. 1024 – 1026 & 1043-1055.*

they climbed 4 new peaks. The main party reached base 16 days later having left Chaplain Donald Beaton, who had broken an ankle skiing, with Sergeant Peter Cole, Royal Army Medical Corps to evacuate to the coast. Cole joined in with a London University group climbing in the Kangertitvatsiag at the snout of the Glacier de France. The expedition then made its way up the 'Col de Woppers' (expedition name) to the north as the way towards Mt Forel. After a heavy snowfall the attempt on Mt Forel was abandoned as sledge hauling was too difficult, but some of the nearby mountains were climbed. The expedition evacuated down the Glacier de France where a boat picked up the party for return home. For the author the 30 days trekking, with one companion, through Greenland's magnificent and daunting mountains to access a glacier that appeared to be unvisited and then to climb virgin peaks remains a most memorable and testing experience.

The author, thereafter, was a member of the JSE Elephant Island 1970/71⁴⁵; leader of the JSE Northern Patagonian Ice-field 1972/3,⁴⁶ member of the expeditions to Nuptse 1975 and Everest 1976 and then led Api 1980.⁴⁷ Fleming, post Greenland, led Tirich Mir (1969),⁴⁸ before taking charge of the training for Everest 1976, which included leading the Himachal Pradesh and Nuptse expeditions and taking part in Everest 1976. Dilly,⁴⁹ 'a mildly eccentric Naval Reserve doctor with a wide mountaineering experience,'⁵⁰ latterly Professor, St George's Hospital Medical School, went on to be the expedition doctor for Axel Heiberg 1972, Tirich Mir, Himachal Pradesh and Nuptse.

Next to explore in Greenland was Lieutenant Colonel John Muston, MBE,⁵¹ Fellow of the Royal Geographical

Society (FRGS), Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC). In all, he led or was a member of, six expeditions to Greenland before retirement in 1989, having been the Commandant of the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre (JSMTC) (Wales). He was a member of Everest 1976 and the preceding training expeditions. After leaving service, he then led or took part in a further ten expeditions to Greenland.

Muston led the 1971 AMA expedition to Evighedsfjord north east of Sukkertoppen, including Lieutenant Meryon Bridges,⁵² Royal Engineers and James, (a member of the 1968 expedition. The police boat *Malik* took them to a base at Kangiusaq.⁵³ They climbed 15 peaks (10 first ascents) and carried out glaciological, hydrology, botanical and ornithological research. The following year (1972) Muston led the AMA Axel Heiberg expedition,⁵⁴ Canadian Arctic, making 50 ascents. Sergeant Ken Scaife died in a crevasse accident from which Sapper David Lewis was rescued by Dilly, who was awarded the George Medal.⁵⁵ Captain Timothy King, RAOC,⁵⁶ who went on to lead or join a number of other Greenland expeditions, and Lance Corporal Bronco Lane, Special Air Service, who went on to summit Everest in 1976, were team members. Bridges went on to participate in eight Himalayan expeditions between 1973 and 1996, including Everest (1976), Api 1980, Everest (1992),⁵⁷ and then led the successful Gasherbrum I (1996) expedition.⁵⁸

In 1974, Lieutenant Michael Cran, Royal Scots crossed Greenland west to east as a member of the RAF Trans Greenland Expedition led by Squadron Leader Dan Glead. The team portered their food, equipment and

45 Agnew, C.H., of Lochnaw yr, Elephant Island, *Alpine Journal* 1972, pp. 204-210.

46 Agnew, C.H., of Lochnaw yr and C S Gobey, *The Joint Services Expedition to Chilean Patagonia 1972/73*, *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 140, No. 2 (Jun., 1974, pp. 262-268. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1797083?seq=1> (accessed 28 July 2020).

47 Crispin Agnew of Lochnaw, *Soldiers on Api*, *Alpine Journal* 1981, pp. 167-171.

48 Day, Henry, Tirich Mir, 1969, *Alpine Journal* 1970 pp. 79-86.

49 https://prabook.com/web/peter_noel.dilly/642240 (accessed 22 July 2020).

50 *Military Mountaineering* p. 109.

51 *London Gazette*, 29 December 1989, Supplement: 51981 p. 6. <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/51981/supplement/1> (accessed 28 July 2020).

52 Muston, A.J., *Mountain Moments, A Miscellany Celebrating 40 Years of the Army Mountaineering Association*, Private Publication, Meryon Bridges pp. 18 and 26-29. (*Mountain Moments*). [https://www.armymountaineer.org.uk/Members/Journal/PDF at end of Journal PDFs \(](https://www.armymountaineer.org.uk/Members/Journal/PDF%20at%20end%20of%20Journal%20PDFs%20) accessed 28 July 2020). Bridges, Meryon Grenville (Oral History), Imperial War Museum (not including climbing) - <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80020102> (accessed 27 July 2020).

53 *Military Mountaineering*, pp. 107/8.

54 Muston, A.J., (1973). *British Army Expedition to Axel Heiberg Island, 1972*. *Polar Record*, 16(104), 723-723 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/polar-record/article/british-army-expedition-to-axel-heiberg-island-1972/C1F0F581C743507D722D6A93D3D49C75> (accessed 29 July 2020). Richard Brooke, *Triennial Report 1970-2 Polar Regions*, *Alpine Journal* p. 216.

55 *The London Gazette*, 9 April 1973, Supplement: 45949 p. 4605. <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/45949/supplement/4605> (Accessed 22 July 2020)

56 *Mountain Moments*, Tim King pp. 19-20.

57 *Military Mountaineering* pp. 224-227.

58 Ruthven, Bill, *Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports 1996*, *Alpine Journal* 1997 pp. 289 – 297 at 294/5.



The Police Boat Malik in Evigheds fjord. Photo Author's Collection

sledges up the Russell glacier and then sledge hauled 350 miles over 37 days across the icecap, descending to the coast near Angmagssalik.⁵⁹ In the same year an RMA Sandhurst expedition led by Lieutenant Richard Anderson, Royal Artillery, went to the Stauning Alps in East Greenland, but their plans were restricted by bad weather.⁶⁰

By the late 1970's, Greenland had opened up sufficiently for unit and minor adventurous training expeditions to take place using RAF arctic training flights to and from the various airstrips. In 1978, Captain Peter Breadmore, Army Physical Training Corps, who had been with the author in Patagonia, led a six-man team which circumnavigated

Milne Land in inflatables, and climbed 16 peaks (14 first ascents) in the Stauning Alps, Renland and Paul Stern Land and explored the Aries and Mercury glaciers.⁶¹ In 1979, Muston led an RAOC expedition, flying into Mestersvig, which was unsuccessful in climbing Petermann's Bjerg, 2943m (9656 ft) from a base at the west end of the Dickson Fjord.⁶² In 1980 Muston and King were members of a civilian botanical expedition led by Dr Geoffrey Halliday,⁶³ to Hochstetter Forland near Scoresby Sund. They made the second ascent of Wildspitze and the Matterhorn both first climbed by Major Mike Banks, Royal Marines, while on the British North East Greenland expedition 1951/2. King, who was an accomplished artist and later Chair of the Armed Forces Art Society, had some of his paintings included in Dr Halliday's *Flora of East Greenland*.⁶⁴

In 1983, Warrant Officer Stuart King, RAOC, who had been with Muston in Greenland in 1971, led an expedition to the Sukkertoppen area, which carried out some botanical, glaciological and ornithological research climbing 16 peaks (several first ascents).⁶⁵

In 1984, Muston returned to the Sondrestrom with the mountaineering and canoe instructors from the JSMTTC (Wales).⁶⁶ In marginal weather, the canoeists circumnavigated the (almost) island of Paarnaquussuit Quuvat and the mountaineers climbed nine peaks. At the end of the expedition the pickup boat failed to arrive, so half of the party canoed back and the other half walked the 70 miles to the airfield.

Major R A Churcher led a Royal Green Jacket Regiment expedition in 1987, which using inflatables, motored 270 miles to the inner reaches of Scoresby Sund camped on the shores of Vestfjord and climbed 8 peaks (5 first ascents) in Paul Stern Land. For the return, the party split in two with one group taking the inflatables back to Constable Pynt, a journey fraught by pack ice and a storm, while the other group trekked 60 miles across Jameson Land. The expedition collected botanical species for Lancaster University, noted 23 bird species and visited the Inuit sites at Rype Fjord.⁶⁷

59 Information from Mike Cran. Derek Fordham, *Triennial Report 1973-5 Greenland*, *Alpine Journal* 1976, p. 206 at p. 209; *Military Mountaineering*, p. 115.

60 *Military Mountaineering*, p. 120.

61 *Military Mountaineering*, pp. 136/7.

62 Information from Lieutenant Colonel John Muston. *Military Mountaineering* p. 137/8.

63 Peck, Edward, *Mount Everest Foundation Notes 1980-81*, *Alpine Journal* 1982 p. 238, *Greenland and the Arctic* p. 244.

64 Halliday, Geoffrey, *A Flora of The East Greenland Central Fjord Region 70oN - 77oN* (Trollius Publications, 2019). <https://www.nhbs.com/a-flora-of-the-east-greenland-central-fjord-region-70n-77n-book> (accessed 22 July 2020).

65 *Military Mountaineering*, p. 176.

66 Information from Lieutenant Colonel John Muston. *Military Mountaineering* p. 178/9.

67 *Military Mountaineering*, pp. 196/7.



Pictured are soldiers of the Royal Signals moving through the wilderness of Greenland during Exercise MIDNIGHT SUN. These soldiers were Territorial Army soldiers taking part in one of the largest TA exercises ever mounted alongside the BT Emergency Response Team (ERT), as part of Defence Career Partnering. Photo: Adrian Harlen ABIPP, Crown Copyright

Muston's final expedition in 1988, as a serving soldier, flew into Constable Pynt and made their way by inflatables the 160 miles to Milne Land.⁶⁸ Camp was established on the north side of the Korridoren glacier and a few peaks climbed, but bad weather intervened. With only one working outboard engine, and towing the other inflatables, the expedition made its way slowly back to Constable Pynt through pack ice. On the same C130 flight, both in and out, was a Green Howard's unit expedition led by David Johnson with seven soldiers, which explored Jameson Land.

After almost 10 years absence, King returned in 1989, with Muston, leading an expedition of mainly novices to Liverpool Land.⁶⁹ Using inflatables in Hurry Inlet to set up camps on the east of the inlet, forays were made to climb

the peaks. King, with Muston, returned to Sondrestrom in 1992 where they climbed a number of peaks.

Since then, with increasing access to Greenland, a new cadre of army climbers and explorers have led unit and other expeditions to Greenland, many, since 1 February 2002, under the auspices of the Adventurous Training Group (Army) - but that is another story.⁷⁰

PRESENT DAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVENTUROUS TRAINING IN GREENLAND

Greenland continues to present wonderful opportunities for adventurous training, whether it is taking unit expeditions to climb the easier mountains,⁷¹ or big wall extreme climbing on Mirror Wall⁷², or near Tasermiut Fjord.⁷³ Sea kayaking in the Greenland seas follows

⁶⁸ Information from Lieutenant Colonel John Muston. *Military Mountaineering* pp. 206/7

⁶⁹ King, Tim, *Liverpool Land*, *Alpine Journal* 1990 pp. 142-144.

⁷⁰ See: *The Army Mountaineer*, *Journal of the AMA* for details - <https://www.armymountaineer.org.uk/Members/Journal/> (accessed 24 July 2020).

⁷¹ n 3.

⁷² <http://www.alpinist.com/doc/web15x/newswire-mirror-wall-greenland> (accessed 23 March 2021)

⁷³ <https://www.planetmountain.com/en/news/alpinism/brazilians-blaze-big-new-climb-ulamertorsuaq-greenland.html> (accessed 23 March 2021)



Pictured is a boat motoring up a fjord as part of Exercise MIDNIGHT SUN. Photo: Adrian Harlen ABIPP, Crown

the Inuit tradition of hunting from seal skin covered kayaks,⁷⁴ and cold water diving ‘demands strength of character’ for those wishing to explore icebergs and ice caves.⁷⁵ There are ample opportunities for ski touring or skiing first descents in Greenland.⁷⁶

The author thanks Colonel (Retired) Meryon Bridges, formerly Royal Engineers, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Jon Fleming, Parachute Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) John Muston, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, Major (Retired) Tim King, Royal Army Ordnance Corp and Surgeon Lieutenant Commander (Retired) Noel Dilly, Royal Navy Reserve for information provided and for helpful comments on the article. The views expressed remain those of the author.

⁷⁴ <https://visitgreenland.com/things-to-do/kayaking/> (accessed 23 March 2021)

⁷⁵ <https://visitgreenland.com/things-to-do/diving/> (accessed 23 March 2021)

⁷⁶ n. 2 and <https://www.expeditiongreenland.com/ski-touring> (accessed 23 March 2021)